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# From Nub to Dahab: The Lexical Shift of Fadija Nobiin to Arabic in Egypt

Asmaa Taha

## Introduction

A language shift occurs in a minority language if the dominant language is widely used in various domains. A shift has occurred, and is still occurring, in Fadija Nobiin because of contact with the Arabic language, which is used by the majority. In this paper, I will investigate language shift in the Nobiin language, particularly lexical change in Fadija Nobiin. More specifically, this paper analyzes heavy lexical borrowing from Arabic into Fadija Nobiin, using a Nobiin folk song as an example. Factors that influence language maintenance and shift are discussed to reflect on the Arabic language influence on a minority language. Nubians, including the speakers of Fadija and other vernaculars, are concerned about their language endangerment and many are showing commitment and cooperation to revitalize it and save it from extinction.

## Background on Fadija Nubian

Nubian civilization originated and thrived in the Nile Valley for thousands of years in the area between the first cataract in southern Egypt and the sixth cataract, north of Khartoum, the capital of Sudan.

The origin of the word Nubia is dubious, though the word *nub* is documented in several dictionaries as “gold,” which is feasible since the Nubia is known for rich gold mines and reserves. Emery’s analysis of the origin of the word *nub* in his book *Egypt in Nubia* explains that this area was called Nubia in relation to *nub*,<sup>1</sup> which

1 EMERY, *Egypt in Nubia*, p. 16.

means “gold” in the Nubian language, yielding Nubia as “the land of gold,” and it is still a land rich in gold reserves. The etymology of *nub* meaning “gold” is also found in many Nobiin songs which refer to Nubia as “the land of gold” expressing nostalgia for going back to “the land of gold.” Mohammad Ali-Bik<sup>2</sup> asserts that on the eastern bank of Nile River, along Wadi Allaqi in the Nubia district, a number of ancient gold mines have existed from the time of pharaohs.

The Nubian language belongs to the Eastern Sudanic language family in the Nilo-Saharan phylum.<sup>3</sup> According to Rilly, Nubian, along with Tama, Nyimang, Nara, and the extinct Meroitic language, is a member of the northern branch of Eastern Sudanic.<sup>4</sup> Nubian comprises different languages with varieties spoken in different areas in eastern Darfur, northern Nuba mountains of Sudan, and the Nile valley of northern Sudan and southern Egypt.<sup>5</sup> Before the forced resettlement in the 1960s due to construction of the Aswan High Dam, Egyptian Nubians lived on the Nile banks in southern Egypt.

In this paper, the term “Nubian language” is mainly used to refer to the two Nubian languages in Egypt, Fadija and Mattoki. The Fadija<sup>6</sup> and the Kunuz speak two different Nubian languages, which are not mutually intelligible. In Egypt, before the resettlement in 1963/1964, the Kunuz occupied the northern part of the region, while the Fadija occupied the southern part of Nubia up to the border of Sudan. The Kunuz speak Mattoki spoken around Aswan and Kom Ombo in Southern Egypt. Mattoki and Andaandi (Dongolawi), mainly spoken in Northern Sudan, are two related language varieties of the Nile Nubian language family. Fadija speak Nobiin (Nile Nubian), which is a language spoken both in Egypt and Sudan: Half-

2 I would like to thank my dear uncle Dr. Mohammad Ali-Bik, a professor of Mineralogy and Geochemistry at the Department of Geological Sciences in the Egyptian National Research Center, for his all help during and after the process of writing this paper. He read different versions of the paper and provided thorough and valuable feedback. Dr. Giovanni Ruffini was one of the first people who encouraged me, before and after writing the research paper, by providing significant references, and valuable feedback. I am very grateful for his endless support. I would like to express my warmest thanks and deep appreciation to Marcus Jaeger for his considerable efforts to enhance and improve the quality of the manuscript. I am thankful for all his thorough and valuable comments and suggestions. In addition, I would like to thank Sanna Abou Ras for sharing her research findings with me, checking data accuracy, and for connecting me with other native Fadija speakers. I am also very grateful for Mr. Magdy Abdulhamid who provided me with many data and examples and who also guided me patiently and constructively to understand and analyze the song. I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to my uncle Hamed Ali-Bik for the endless hours he spent in listening to the song, help with its interpretation, and recording it for my reference. Lastly, my heartfelt gratitude to my dear friend Juliana Norton who provided constant constructive feedback in editing few versions of the manuscript.

3 GREENBERG, *The Languages of Africa*, p. 391.

4 RILLY, “The Linguistic Position of Meroitic,” p. 401.

5 ALAMIN, “Noun Phrase Constructions in Nubian Languages,” p. 204.

6 In this study, *fadiḡa* is written as *Fadija*, but some scholars might write it as *Faddicca* or *Fadicha*.

awi, Sukkoth, and Mahas are dialects of Nobiin spoken in Sudan and Fadija is spoken in Egypt. Fadija<sup>7</sup> refers to both the ethnic group as well as the dialectal variety of Nobiin. Modern Nobiin is a descendent from Old Nubian which is also a Nile Nubian language.<sup>8</sup> All examples and data used in this paper are provided by native speakers of Fadija Nobiin.<sup>9</sup>

Nubians have maintained their language and customs throughout centuries, despite important historical and linguistic transformations experienced by the region.<sup>10</sup> The Low Dam of Aswan completed in 1902 and the phases of raising its height in 1912 and 1933 caused extensive damage to Nubian agriculture. However, the most significant changes took place after the forced relocation of the Nubians in both Egypt and Sudan due to the construction of the High Dam in the 1960s. Nubians in Egypt were relocated by the Egyptian government to areas remote from the Nile. Displacement to different environments away from the Nile and living among non-Nubian communities had a serious impact on the cultural and linguistic heritage of the people of the Nubia. Unfortunately, this is the case with all Nubians (both Kunuz and Fadija), who lived in their new districts in both Egypt and Sudan.

Abdel-Hafiz states that

three Nubian groups (Kunuz, Faddicca, and Arabs) lived in the deserted areas to south of Aswan, Egypt. Their villages (total of 41 villages) were scattered along the two banks of the Nile [...]. The Kunuz group occupied the northern villages (17 villages), whereas the Faddicca group used to reside in the southern villages (16 villages). The Arab tribes lived in the middle (8 villages).<sup>11</sup>

He adds that the 2005 parliamentary election records show that 52,155 Nubians live in the Kom Ombo area in Aswan, with the Fadija constituting 57.8% of the population (30,155 inhabitants) the Kunuz constituting 32.7% (or 17,050 inhabitants), and the Arabs constituting 9.5% (4,950 inhabitants).

Dr. Mohamed Taha and Ahmed Ali Bik report there were very few Nubian villages established before the major resettlement in

7 According to the folk etymology, Fadija is comprised of two words; *fa* which means valley or basin and *dija* which means the number five in Nobiin language; possibly referring to the five tribes that inhabited the region.

8 BECHHAUS-GERST, *The (Hi)story of Nobiin*, p. 22.

9 To ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the examples and data obtained in this paper, ten native Fadija speakers participated in this study as the research of this paper is a not a native speaker, but a heritage Fadija. For objectivity, the researcher included speakers from three different Fadija villages: few are related to the researcher herself.

10 EMERY, *Egypt in Nubia*, p. 17.

11 ABDEL-HAFIZ, "The Attitude of Egyptian Nubians towards Their Vernacular and Arabic," p. 1.

1963/1964 such as West Sehel.<sup>12</sup> They both add that there are two major areas of Nubian villages in Aswan occupied by Kunuz and Fadija including the villages located around Kom Ombo such as Balanah and Adendan. They indicate that there are 17 villages of Kunuz as Kalabsha and Medig, while there are 18 villages of Fadija, such as Getta and Ibrim. They report that majority of the Kunuz live in the northern part of Aswan, while most of the Fadija live in the southern part of Aswan. Dr. Mohamed Taha and Ahmed Ali Bik add that there are some villages which have high diversity of Kunuz and Fadija, such as Aneeba and Toshka, and that there are some villages around Kom Ombo such as Balanah and Adendan. Dr. Mohamed Taha reports that there are few villages around Aswan, occupied in 1933 after the second phase of raising the height Dam of Aswan, such as West Sehel and West Aswan. Moreover, Ahmed Ali-Bik points out an additional area inhabited by non-Nubian Egyptians; people living there are called “the Arabs” and they live in 8 villages located mainly between the Kunuz and the Fadija villages in Aswan.

Nubian Egyptians have been in language contact with non-Nubian Egyptians on a small or non-constant scale as a result of trade, tourism or migration for job opportunities in metropolitan cities. However, beginning from 1964, the resettlement in Egypt brought Nubians into direct and constant contact with non-Nubian Egyptians, and with Arabic as an official dominant language. This, in turn, caused a language shift in Nobiin. Monitoring the linguistic changes in the Nobiin language is the aim of this paper, focusing mainly on the Fadija Nobiin variety.

### Factors influencing language maintenance and shift

Appel and Muysken analyze “ethnolinguistic vitality,”<sup>13</sup> a model proposed by Giles, Bourhis, and Tylor comprised of three main factors: status, demographic and institutional support.<sup>14</sup> Ethnolinguistic vitality plays a crucial role in language maintenance and shift and it is the vitality of an ethnolinguistic group “which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations.”<sup>15</sup> The model proposes that high vitality leads to language maintenance or “shift towards extended use,” while low vitality causes a shift in the minority language, which is an observably

12 Special thanks to my uncle Ahmed Ali-Bik who provided essential information about the history of Nubians in Egypt as well as the several inhabitation areas there. A big thanks to Dr. Mohamed Taha, a Fadija native speaker from Ibrim and a Nobiin instructor, who provided full support with geographical information, the song analysis, and glossing.

13 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 33.

14 GILES, BOURHIS & TAYLOR, “Towards a Theory of Language in Ethnic Group Relations,” p. 308.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 308.

plausible explanation of the Fadija Nobiin situation. Moreover, Appel and Muysken emphasize that “ethnolinguistic minorities with little or no group vitality would eventually cease to exist as distinctive groups. Conversely, the more vitality a linguistic group has, the more likely it will survive and thrive as a collective entity in an intergroup context.”<sup>16</sup> Although this model does not focus on language transmission from one generation to another, I prefer it because it highlights the major factors influencing language maintenance and shift. In addition, I argue that the high ethnolinguistic vitality of Fadija Nobiin is one of the main reasons behind its survival and thriving. Therefore, I propose to apply the model of ethnolinguistic vitality to Fadija Nobiin.

### Status factors

#### *Language status*

In Egypt, Arabic is not only the official language, but also a language of high esteem because it is the language of the Qur’an and by extension is the language of the Islamic religion. However, Nubians retain their own language as a means of social communication with each other, in spite of the serious changes that have impacted their language, especially after the displacement and the merger with the other strata of the Egyptian society. Consequently, Fadija Nubian is not considered as high in status as Arabic. Arabic is the main vehicle of communication in various domains, which makes the process of the language shift in Fadija Nobiin extensive, pervasive, and persistent. Close contact with Arabic has also resulted in Nubian bilingualism. There are two types of bilingual Nubian speakers, “those who are skilled bilinguals fluent in both a Nubian dialect and Arabic, and those who are much more at ease with Arabic.”<sup>17</sup> Rouchdy considers this second type of speakers “non-competent” or “imperfect bilinguals.”<sup>18</sup>

Although Appel and Muysken argue that minority speakers might have a negative attitude, “a feeling of linguistic inferiority,” towards their own variety or consider it as low status,<sup>19</sup> in my experience Fadija Nubians are very proud of their language, but they are also aware of the importance of learning Arabic in order to achieve academic and professional achievements. For example, all the Fadija speakers who have participated in this study have strong value of their cultural and ethnic identity, i.e., Nubians are attached to cultural traditions, linguistic identity, and their ethnicity.

16 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 33.

17 ROUCHDY, *Language in Contact*, p. 339.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 341.

19 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 34.

In her study of the Egyptian Nubians attitude towards Arabic and Nubian languages, Abou Ras confirms that her participants have positive attitudes towards both languages. They favor learning and using Nubian, but they also understand that Arabic is essential for their education, lives, and religion.<sup>20</sup> Rouchdy believes that Nubian pride is one of the factors that preserved the language “opposed to a situation where speakers consider themselves an underprivileged linguistic minority.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, Nubians have pride in their language and ethnicity which is considered a crucial element for language maintenance and preservations.

With regard to the language status of Fadija Nubians, some speakers of the dominant language stigmatize Fadija Nubians and all Nubian varieties. The media played a role in spreading these negative attitudes. For example, many movies in Egyptian cinema stigmatize Nubians and portray them as speaking incomprehensible Arabic and/or working lower-class jobs. The stigmatized and pejorative image has been featured in movies since the 1930s, such as *Ilfamus ʔa-sihirj*<sup>22</sup> (*The Magic Lamp*), *Bawab ilsimarah* (*The Doorman of the Building*), and *ʔuθman wi ʔali* (*Othman and Ali*). Recent television shows in 2000 and 2013 still depict the stigmatized portray of Nubians, such as *ħuruf ilnasʔb* (*Letters of Fraud*), and *nikdeb law ʔulna: mabinħibif* (*We Would Be Lying, If We Said We Are Not in Love*). Rouchdy states that Nubians were said to speak *barbari*, a pejorative term referring to a Nubian speaker with a heavy accent in Arabic or who could not be understood by non-Nubians.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, “the Arabic word *rutana*, meaning foreign or unintelligible speech is often used by non-Nubian speakers (i.e., Arabic speakers) to refer to all Nubian varieties and other vernacular languages.”<sup>24</sup> As a speaker of Nobiin, I indeed experienced situations in which I felt inferior to non-Nubian speakers at schools in Egypt.

### *Economic status*

Before 1964, Fadija Nubians formed an independent, complex, agriculture-based community who used to live by the banks of the Nile river, the source of life. There were limited education opportunities before the resettlement and the most common jobs were sailing, fishing, and farming. There were limited cultivable areas and a

20 ABOU RAS, The attitude of Egyptian Nubian University students towards Arabic and Nubian languages, p. 72.

21 ROUCHDY, *Language in Contact*, p. 339

22 In this paper, International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcription of Egyptian Colloquial Arabic is used to better represent the variations in the pronunciation of allophones between Arabic and Nobiin. The IPA transcription system is used to represent both Fadija and Arabic to unify the transcription system and represent the differences and similarities between the borrowed and source words. See Appendix 2 for details.

23 ROUCHDY, *Nubians and the Nubian Language in Contemporary Egypt*, p. xiv.

24 ТАНА, “The Lexicon in Endangered Languages,” p. 5.

small food supply due to the heightening of the old Dam of Aswan leading to the submergence of vast areas of lands. Therefore, many Nubian men had to migrate to bigger cities in Egypt, like Cairo and Alexandria, and to the country of Sudan, to find employment.<sup>25</sup> The increasing number of the Nubians migration for work lead to “a transmission of more Arabic to their children when they returned home on holiday. This factor is a primary indicator in the attrition of the Nubian language.”<sup>26</sup>

Nubians were known to work in low-income jobs, such as doorkeepers and some jobs in hotels and restaurants: “For generations the Nubians have earned their livelihood as domestic servants or as sailors of the Upper Egyptian Nile, in both of which professions I think they may be considered masters.”<sup>27</sup> Egyptian Arabs almost always confined these jobs to Nubians, not only because of their limited educational opportunities, but also for two important reasons, which are derived from their culture: their good personal hygiene and honesty. Although the nature of Nubians’ jobs once carried social and linguistic stigma, this is no longer the case, as Nubians have shifted and broadened their occupations. They now play an important role in Egyptian society.

The low economic status of Nubians could be considered a crucial factor for the language shift from Fadija Nubian toward Arabic. Nubians who travelled to big cities in search of a livelihood had to learn the majority language to get better jobs and attain a better standard of living. In the past, Fadija were planning to return to their homeland villages after retirement or building up some savings, but nowadays that is not necessarily the case. Many Nubians do not plan to retire to their home villages, especially after their relocation.

According to Abou-Ras, “Egyptian Nubian university students inside and outside the Nubian regions have a positive attitude toward Arabic and Nubian languages [...] not only in terms of religion and education, but also for integration.”<sup>28</sup> Learning the dominant language might not have negative effects on the Egyptian Nubian speakers, but many Nubians, including myself and all who participated in this paper, have fears and concerns about their language endangerment and loss.

### *Social status*

Some Fadija Nubians who lived in Cairo and urban cities tend to shift towards Arabic in order to be considered of high social status.

25 EMERY, *Egypt in Nubia*, p. 17.

26 ABOU RAS, *The Attitude of Egyptian Nubian University Students towards Arabic and Nubian Languages*, p. 17.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., p. 79.



Nubians who shift towards Arabic, “Arabized” Nubians, do not necessarily have low self-esteem about their native tongue, but they want to fit in the new society. Abdel-Hafiz notes that “although Nubians are emotionally attached to their respective vernaculars, they are aware of the importance of Arabic as a tool for educational advancement and social promotion.”<sup>29</sup> Rouchdy observes that a rapid language decline among Cairo Nubian speakers was noticeable and the dominance of Arabic was found on phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels.<sup>30</sup>

The older generations of Nubians have both language loyalty and competence, which is represented in their continuous use of their mother tongue. The language loyalty of the younger generations is manifested in their great interest to learn their language and in the amount of time invested and spent to achieve this goal. There are many young Nubians taking language classes in Cairo and Alexandria to learn Nobiin, such as the Nobiin Language Club in Cairo. Poeschke explains that Nubian children have “very limited competence in Nubian, but represent the future generations.”<sup>31</sup> The younger generations, especially those who live outside the Nubian regions, are not as competent as their elders because they are not given opportunities to improve their competence and fluency with their elders.

Because of their awareness of their unique ethnicity as well as language preservation efforts, Nubians began socializing with other Nubian speakers of the same or different social class. Rouchdy believes that socialization is the most important factor in language maintenance.<sup>32</sup> She asserts that “if a minority language ceased to be used in homes for purposes of primary socialization, the maintenance of that language is threatened despite any growth of ethnic awareness.”<sup>33</sup> Abdel-Hafiz’s results confirm Rouchdy’s research that Nubian is highly used among relatives and friends within the family domain, but they use Arabic to talk about politics, religion, and sports.<sup>34</sup> Abou-Ras reports that fluent speakers use Nubian at home, especially in “non-academic public settings,” while Arabic is usually used in academic domains. Fluent speakers can use either Arabic or Nubian in other linguistic domains.<sup>35</sup> To elaborate, her study reveals that

29 ABDEL-HAFIZ, “The Attitude of Egyptian Nubians towards Their Vernacular and Arabic,” p. 16.

30 ROUCHDY, *Nubians and the Nubian Language in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 32.

31 POESCHKE, *Nubians in Egypt and Sudan*, p. 116.

32 ROUCHDY, *Nubians and the Nubian language in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 17.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

34 ABDEL-HAFIZ, “The Attitude of Egyptian Nubians towards Their Vernacular and Arabic,” p. 16.

35 ABOU RAS, *The Attitude of Egyptian Nubian University Students towards Arabic and Nubian Languages*, p. 73.

15 percent of participants in the Nubian region use NL<sup>36</sup> when they talk about politics and the economy. 20 percent of the participants use NL when they discuss religious issues and 25 percent use NL to discuss football matches. On the other hand, 70 percent use NL to discuss family issues. [...] Most Nubians living in the Nubian region use NL to discuss family issues. Outside the Nubian region, 35 percent use NL to discuss family issues. This percentage is surprising as the participants live in an Arabic speaking environment. Participants living outside the Nubian region will not use NL to discuss issues of other domains.<sup>37</sup>

## Demographic factors

### *Relocation and resettlement*

The essential element that caused the shift from Nubian to Arabic is the relocation of Nubians in Egypt in the 1960s because of the construction of the High Dam. Nubians used to live in remote areas apart from non-Nubian Egyptians. Nubians resisted the Arabic interference in their language by taking advantage of living in their own community. Approximately 50,000 Nubians had to abandon their lands to resettle in a new geographical area, which is known as “New Nubia.”<sup>38</sup> Old Nubia meant, and still means, more than some land beside the Nile River; it has been a symbol of life and culture. Even today, Nubians have nostalgia to go back to Old Nubia. Rouchdy believes that some negative factors were not considered while relocating Nubians, such as the location of houses on the basis of close kin rather than family size.<sup>39</sup> In other words, in Old Nubia one’s next-door neighbor was also one’s relative, but that was not considered during the relocation. All Nubians were then moved to the resettlement villages according to family size. It is important to note that the new houses were not located near the Nile, which is so sacred and significant in Nubian culture and tradition. Similarly, Appel and Muysken believe that the geographical distribution of minority group members generally affects language maintenance and shift.<sup>40</sup> Minority groups, like Fadija Nubians, tend to live clustered in the same areas before or after their relocations, a key element in the survival of a minority language. After being forcibly relocated from Old Nubia, they were scattered both socially and emotionally, unlike before when families lived very close to each other.

36 NL refers to Nubian languages.

37 ABOU RAS, *The Attitude of Egyptian Nubian University Students towards Arabic and Nubian Languages*, p. 46.

38 JANMYR, *Nubians in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 128.

39 ROUCHDY, “‘Persistence’ or ‘Tip’ in Egyptian Nubian,” p. 93.

40 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 35.

The resettlement allowed close contact with not only southern Egyptians in Aswan, but also with Mattoki Nubians. Mattoki and Fadija are two Nubian languages, so Kunuz and Fadija speakers cannot understand each other. Hemdan<sup>41</sup> states that, especially after the resettlement, Kunuz and Fadija spoke Arabic to communicate with each other. Consequently, Fadija Nubians encounter various changes in different aspects of life: language, culture, customs, social class, education, and ancestral land in their interactions with these different groups. After relocation, Nubian women had to work in a different linguistic environment outside their homes. They started to work in the markets, which brought them in direct contact with Arabic speakers and in turn, affected their use of the Nubian language as well as their interaction with their children. Nubians were in daily contact with *sʿaʿajdah* “Southern Egyptians” who speak *sʿiʿidi*: “southern Egyptian dialect of Arabic,” which influenced and still influences the Nubian language. Eventually, all the situations mentioned above led to the endangerment of Nubian language and a threat to its survival. It could be argued that providing schools, mosques, markets, and electricity were positive outcomes of the relocation. However, these services could have been provided in Old Nubia, or the Egyptian government could have moved Nubians to areas near the Nile River. Moving out of Old Nubia was one of the crucial factors which has negatively affected the Fadija language and culture.

### *Marriage*

Endogamy is common in some cultures and ethnic groups, including Nubian Egyptians. Fernea indicates that Nubians prefer to marry within their kin groups.<sup>42</sup> It is important to note that within endogamous marriage, it was easier for the family and community to solve problems between spouses. Moreover, Nubians were in favor of endogamous marriage resulting in preserving their culture, traditions, ethnicity, and their language, especially before the resettlement in 1963. Nubians who married non-Nubians were not usually welcomed by the community. According to Rouchdy, even the intermarriage between Fadija Nubians and Mattoki Nubians was not very common.<sup>43</sup> Yet, this has recently changed among educated, urban Nubians. There are not only Fadija /Mattoki marriages, but even some case of marriage between Nubians and non-Nubians.

Non-Nubian Egyptians also did not favor intermarriage, because Nubians were perceived to speak what was referred to as “broken”

41 Sabraia Hemdan is a Fadija native speaker from Abu-Simbel village, who has been very helpful in providing examples as well as song interpretation.

42 FERNEA, *Contemporary Egyptian Nubia*, p. 303.

43 ROUCHDY, “Persistence’ or ‘Tip’ in Egyptian Nubian,” p. 95.

Arabic, to come from a lower social status, and to have darker complexions. However, non-Nubian Egyptians mingled with Nubians, attended Nubian weddings and Nubian baby showers,<sup>44</sup> and visited Nubian homes. Due to the extended contact between Egyptian Nubians and non-Nubians and the occupational shift of Nubians, intermarriage did not remain as rare as it had been. Intermarriage did allow the use of Arabic to expand in several domains, such as at home, which became a real threat to the survival of the Nubian language. Appel and Muysken state that “mixed or inter-ethnic” marriages between the speakers of minority and majority languages will most likely result in allowing the prestigious language, or the dominant language, to be the first language of children.<sup>45</sup> Given that, social changes necessitate language shift towards the dominant language.

#### *Urban and non-urban speakers*

It is likely to have monolingual Arabic children, who are Nubians in origin, both in big cities such as Cairo and Alexandria and in small cities such as in Aswan and Luxor. According to the interviews she collected during her visit to Egypt in 1979, Rouchdy has noted that there are three types of Nubians: monolinguals who speak Arabic only; monolinguals who speak Nubian only; and bilinguals (some of them speaking both Arabic and a Nubian language, and non-competent bilinguals).<sup>46</sup> Rouchdy explains that the monolinguals who speak Arabic were born in big cities, while the monolinguals who speak Nubian lived in villages but moved later to big cities.<sup>47</sup> She adds that younger non-competent bilinguals speak Arabic but tend to understand and speak only some Nubian, while older non-competent bilinguals speak both Nubian and Arabic with Nubian language interference. Figure 1 represents Rouchdy’s classification of Nubian speakers.<sup>48</sup>

As for the fully competent bilinguals, they can easily switch between Arabic and Nubian based on their preference, the linguistic domain as well as people who they interact with. Abou-Ras reports that most of the Nubian participants in her study who live in urban and non-urban areas speak both Arabic and Nubian when they interact with proficient bilingual Nubians. Based on the results of her study, collected from both questionnaires and interviews with Nubian participants, she concludes that

44 Nubians have parties to celebrate the birth of a new baby.

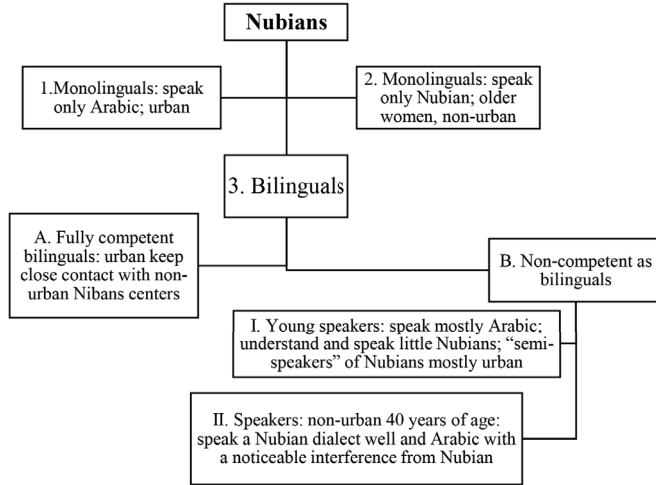
45 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 35.

46 ROUCHDY, “Persistence’ or ‘Tip’ in Egyptian Nubian,” p. 98.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Fig. 1. Rouchdy's illustration of the types of bilinguals and their competence levels, as well as whether they are urban or non-urban Egyptian Nubians.



30 percent of participants in the Nubian region speak only Nubian with people who speak Nubian and Arabic, while 20 percent speak both Arabic and Nubian. 50 percent speak Arabic only because they are not able to speak Nubian. [...] Outside the Nubian region, the results show that 80 percent of participants speak Arabic language when talking to someone who speaks Arabic and Nubian because they cannot speak Nubian. Similar to participants in the Nubian region, those who live outside the Nubian region wish they could speak Nubian when they talk to people who speak both Arabic and Nubian. This feeling stems from the fact that the Nubian language is a live manifestation of the Nubian identity that all Nubians feel attached to. Only 20 percent prefer to speak Nubian and none chose to speak both Arabic along with Nubian.<sup>49</sup>

### Institutional, governmental, and other factors

#### *Religion*

Nubia became Christian in the middle of the fifth century, followed by the Arab expansion to Egypt in the seventh century. Faraji confirms that “Christianity in Nubia gradually emerged beginning in the late fourth and early fifth centuries and was marked by various stages of progression leading to the Byzantine missions of the sixth century.”<sup>50</sup> He adds that the Nubian King Silko’s victory against the Blemmyes in the middle of the fifth century marks a turning point in

49 ABOU RAS, *The Attitude of Egyptian Nubian University Students towards Arabic and Nubian Languages*, pp. 48–49.

50 FARAJI, *The Roots of Nubian Christianity Uncovered*, p. 85.

the Christianization of Nubia, rather than the Byzantine missions. Following 641, the Nubian region was conquered by “Muslims who started to migrate to Christian Nubia from the eighth century until the eleventh centuries, in which the northern portion of Egyptian Nubia was totally occupied.”<sup>51</sup> The linguistic and cultural contact between the Arabs and Nubians is not new, dating back centuries. It has been argued that the early contact between Arabs and Nubians was prior to the Islamic conquest of Egypt. Taha reports that trade and migration took place between the two groups across the Red Sea and parts of Africa.<sup>52</sup> Islam spread in Egypt, and by the fourteenth century Arabic was extensively used. With the advent of Islamic Nubia and intermarriage, more lexical borrowing from Arabic occurred. Taha considers this type of borrowing a common feature of dominant groups, usually after migration or conquest.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to point out that Islam in Nubia has changed greatly, as well as the influence of Islam on the use of the Nobiin language. When answering the question whether all Nubian should speak Arabic as it is the language of the Qur’an, more than half of the participants who reside in Nubian regions believe that it is essential to speak Arabic for religious purposes, but they refuse to disregard their ethnic language on account of their Islamic identity.<sup>54</sup> In her study, Abou-Ras conducted surveys and interviewed Nubians who live within the Nubian regions along with those who live in non-Nubians areas. She reports that

outside the Nubian regions, less than half of the participants (10 percent + 20 percent) think that it is a necessity to speak [Arabic] as it is the language of Qur’an. More than half of the participants, 60 percent (40 percent + 20 percent), do not agree. Only 10 percent are neutral.<sup>55</sup>

Nubians usually use Arabic to discuss religious topics due to the Islamic influence as well as the media. More than 80% of the Nubian speakers, living in Nubian areas, use Arabic when discussing religious issues, while those who live in non-Nubian areas solely use Arabic to discuss religious domains.<sup>56</sup>

51 FERNEA, *Contemporary Egyptian Nubia*, p. 43.

52 TAHA, “The Influence of Dongolawi Nubian on Sudan Arabic,” p. 1.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

54 ABOU RAS, *The Attitude of Egyptian Nubian University Students towards Arabic and Nubian Languages*, p. 59.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 45–48.

### *Media*

Mass media and communication systems have led to a significant language shift in the Nubian language. The Egyptian government's provision of electricity to Nubian houses allows Nubians to have televisions and radios. With Arabic as the dominant official language, most shows, programs, and broadcasts are in Arabic, which promotes learning Arabic and fosters the Arabic culture. Furthermore, Rouchdy argues that Nubian songs were only broadcast on the radio and "children grow up listening to it while watching Arabic programs only."<sup>57</sup>

Nubians use the Arabic script on Twitter, Facebook, and text messages to communicate with each other. This is not only because it is the dominant language, but also because the Nubian languages are written in the Nubian alphabet, which is not as not accessible as Arabic. As a result of using Arabic scripts to write Nubian in mass media and communication, the Arabic language continues to impart its increasing influence. However, this has recently changed due to the several literacy books developed using the Nubian script to teach the language. In a continuation of the efforts devoted to facilitate accessing the Nubian characters, the Sophia Nubian font was created in compliant with the universal Unicode typeface. Abou-Ras states that "even though there are Nubian characters, not all Nubians know that the Nubian language can be written."<sup>58</sup> I argue that more efforts need to be exerted to raise the awareness of Nubians and non-Nubians regarding the fact the Nubian can be written, which will help in language resurrection and revitalization.

### *Education*

Arabic, being the dominant official language, was and still is the only medium of instruction in schools as well as universities. Educational opportunities for Nubians have greatly improved after the resettlement, which resulted in better educated women and the spread of Arabic. According to Rouchdy, Nubian women in urban areas are more educated than Nubian women in rural areas.<sup>59</sup> Rouchdy also added that urban Nubian women are fluent in Arabic and speak Arabic to their children, who could turn into Arabic monolingual speakers or semi-speakers of Nubian.<sup>60</sup>

Appel and Muysken consider children's proficiency in a minority language as a main factor in boosting the maintenance of that language.<sup>61</sup> Nubians are aware of the importance of reviving their

57 ROUCHDY, *Nubians and the Nubian Language in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 18.

58 ABOU RAS, *The Attitude of Egyptian Nubian University Students towards Arabic and Nubian Languages*, p. 64.

59 ROUCHDY, *Nubians and the Nubian Language in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 19.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

61 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 42.



language, which is why they teach it to their children now. Therefore, Nubians launched educational campaigns to teach the Nubian language. The 2014 Egyptian Constitution stipulates preserving the rights of minorities including Nubians with a promise of relocating Nubians to their homelands, i.e., Old Nubia. However, the 2014 Egyptian Constitution is no longer in effect. Moreover, initiatives to teach Nubian culture in Egyptian universities, such as South Valley University and the University of Alexandria, are no longer encouraged or carried out.

#### *Government and its services*

Up to now government officials paid no attention to the Nubian language, which posed a threat to its maintenance. Governmental and administrative services are in Arabic, which forces Nubians to learn the majority language. They have to learn Arabic to get the services they need, which expands the use of Arabic with little account to Nubian language. Appel and Muysken ascertain that when a dominant language is always used as the medium of communication, the usefulness of the minority language will diminish.<sup>62</sup>

#### **Lexical borrowing**

Browne indicates that loanwords in Old Nubian are from Greek, Coptic, Arabic, Pre-Coptic Egyptian, and Meroitic.<sup>63</sup> In general, the lexicon of the Fadija Nubian underwent two major processes: vocabulary loss and vocabulary addition. Three types of borrowing from Arabic are discussed with examples below.

#### *Need-based borrowing*

Rouchdy illustrates that particular words were borrowed into the Nubian language because they were originally not found in Nubian culture.<sup>64</sup> Dimmendaal highlights that borrowed words enter into a language in “smaller or larger sets related to specific cultural domains rather than to basic vocabulary.”<sup>65</sup> Some lexical borrowing from Arabic occurred because new life domains were introduced into the Nubian culture: terminology about Islam, education, and law, as well as modern tools and machinery. Unfortunately, further research on the reasons for the intense lexical borrowings in certain domains is still needed.

Rouchdy has noted that during her visit in 1979, the Nubians she interviewed used only Arabic words for greeting such as *izzajukum*

62 Ibid., p. 37.

63 BROWNE, *Old Nubian Grammar*, p. 10.

64 ROUCHDY, *Nubians and the Nubian Language in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 29.

65 DIMMENDAAL, *Historical Linguistics and the Comparative Study of African Languages*, p. 265.



“how are you?” or *ahlan* “hi,” while very few Nubians used the Nubian greeting *maskagna* “How are you doing?”<sup>66</sup> In Fadija Nobiin, greeting words are commonly borrowed from Arabic used in both urban and non-urban areas. Table 1<sup>67</sup> below provides some examples of loanwords and phrases used for greetings.

Table 1. Greetings.

Loanwords	Arabic source	English translation
<i>?alhamdu-llila:</i>	<i>?alhamdu-llila:</i>	praise to Allah
<i>afjalogo</i>	<i>ʕaffa</i>	stay well, good bye
<i>herlogo</i>	<i>xajer</i>	stay blessed

Some of words or phrases borrowed from Arabic might have Islamic nature and connotation, Table 2 below presents some examples of such loanwords.

Table 2. Terms related to Islam.

Loanwords	Arabic source	English translation
<i>sala:</i>	<i>sʕala:h</i>	prayer, praying
<i>sallir</i>	<i>basʕalj</i>	I pray
<i>ʕamamah</i>	<i>gameʕ</i>	mosque
<i>aza:b</i>	<i>ʕza:b</i>	torture, punishment
<i>din</i>	<i>din</i>	religion

As illustrated in Table 3 below, many words which are related to school and education are borrowed from Arabic, entering the Nobiin language.

Table 3. Terms related to education.

Loanwords	Arabic source	English translation
<i>medresa</i>	<i>madrassa</i>	school
<i>kita:b</i>	<i>kitab</i>	book
<i>modaresa</i>	<i>mudaris</i>	teacher
<i>gelam</i>	<i>?alam</i>	pen
<i>geraja</i>	<i>?eraja</i>	reading
<i>fehmo</i>	<i>fihm</i>	understand
<i>telmiza</i>	<i>tilmiz</i>	student

Some borrowed words related to modern tools and machinery have entered Nubian. Table 4 includes some examples.

Table 4. Terms related to technology

Loanwords	Arabic source	English translation
<i>arabija</i>	<i>ʕarabija</i>	car
<i>gater</i>	<i>?atr</i>	train
<i>wabur, babur</i>	<i>wabur</i>	machine or motor

66 ROUGHDY, *Nubians and the Nubian Language in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 20.

67 Loan words and phrases were provided by the native Fadija speakers who participated in this research.

Moreover, there are some borrowings words related to the government sector, examples are provided below in Table 5.

Loanwords	Arabic source	English translation
<i>hokum</i>	<i>ḥukum</i>	governing
<i>hokuma</i>	<i>ḥukuma</i>	government
<i>hokmu</i>	<i>ḥokm</i>	judgement
<i>bolis</i>	<i>bolis</i>	police
<i>mahkama</i>	<i>mahkama</i>	court
<i>gadj</i>	<i>ʔadi</i>	a judge
<i>siḡin</i>	<i>siḡin</i>	prison

Table 5. Terms related to government

### Relexification

Appel and Muysken refer to relexification as words from the majority language which replace words from minority language.<sup>68</sup> Relexification is one of the ways that a majority language controls a minority language and limits its use. Appel and Muysken consider relexification to be a phenomenon which goes hand in hand with the loss of lexical skills in a minority language.<sup>69</sup> Table 6 below illustrates some examples of vocabulary decline in Fadija Nobiin.

Native words	Loanwords	Arabic source	English translation
<i>ganir</i>	<i>moos</i>	<i>mus</i>	razor blade
<i>kattari</i>	<i>hait</i>	<i>ḥeta</i>	wall
<i>ko:</i>	<i>esid</i>	<i>ʔased</i>	lion
<i>duḡna</i>	<i>ernab</i>	<i>ʔarnab</i>	rabbit

Table 6. Nobiin words undergoing replacement.

### Lexical variation reflecting borrowing from Arabic

Appel and Muysken have proposed that the following lexical borrowability scale moving from “easily borrowed” to “less easily borrowed” which is illustrated the scale in Figure 2 below:

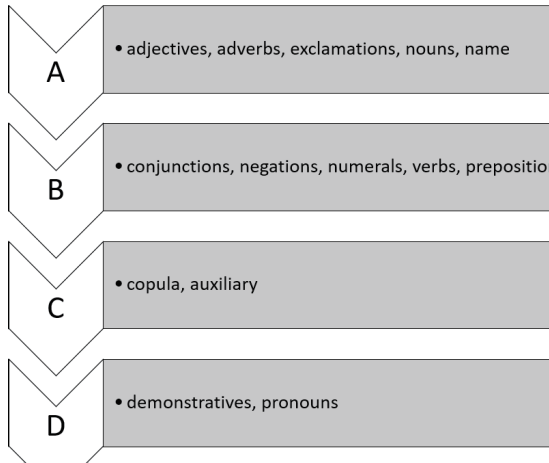
Heavy lexical borrowing from Arabic to Nubian was primarily caused by prolonged contact with non-Nubian Egyptians. Some function words have been borrowed, such as *lakin* “but” and *illa* “except.” Rouchdy argued that non-competent Fadija bilingual speakers always add this suffix *-a*, which is a predicate marker, to borrowed Arabic adjectives: *aneeda* “stubborn,” *kasalana* “lazy,” and *fadija* “empty.”<sup>70</sup> However, she does not provide contextualized examples to support her argument. It might be possible to add the predicate marker *-a* to predicate adjective, but it is because that such speakers apply the rule they know which is a sign of overgeneralization rather than incompetence. That being said, it is important to note that all

68 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 42.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

70 ROUCHDY, *Nubians and the Nubian Language in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 27.

Fig. 2. Appel and Muysken's lexical borrowability scale.



adjectives have to take the suffix *-a* and that it is a syntactically conditioned marker. There are few examples to illustrate predicate adjective as well as non-predicate adjective provided below.

1 *in kitti-i gadim-a<sup>71</sup>*  
 DEM dress-NOM old.ADJ-PRED  
 "This dress is old."

2 *no:g gadim-la fa ŋu:r*  
 house old.ADJ-LOC FUT go.PRS-1SG  
 "I will go to the old house."

3 *buru afri*  
 girl beautiful  
 "a beautiful girl"

4 *in buru afri-a*  
 DEM girl beautiful-PRED  
 "This girl is beautiful."

The Fadija native speakers who participated in this research point out that some borrowed Arabic words are being used alternatively with native or authentic Nobiin words. Table 7 below provides specific examples of doublets of words used in the Fadija Nobiin.

71 Glossing abbreviations used in this paper: 1 - first person; 2 - second person; 3 - third person; ACC - accusative; ADJU - adjunctive; ADV - adverb; AFF - affirmative; COND - conditional; DEF - definite; DEM - demonstrative; DET - determiner; DIR - directional; EMP - emphatic; FUT - future; GEN - genitive; IMP - imperative; INCH - inchoative; IND - indicative; LOC - locative; NEG - negation; NMLZ - nominalizer; NOM - nominative; PL - plural; PLACT - pluractional; POSS - possessive; PRED - predicate; PRF - perfective; PRS - present; PT1 - preterite 1; PT2 - preterite 2; Q - question; SG - singular; STAT - stative.

Native Nobiin Words	Loanwords	Arabic source	English translation
<b>Verbs</b>			
<i>messe-en</i>	<i>sum</i>	<i>sʕo:m</i>	to fast
<i>ogro</i>	<i>azmo</i>	<i>ʕazam</i>	to invite
<i>fa nar</i>	<i>fa suri, fa zur</i>	<i>hazur</i>	will visit
<i>ajo, agjai</i>	<i>ʕuylu</i>	<i>ʕuyl</i>	to work
<i>agarji</i>	<i>atsu</i>	<i>ʕaʕas</i>	sneezed
<b>Adverbs</b>			
<i>issaka</i>	<i>dilwaget</i>	<i>dilwaget</i>	now
<i>ummel</i>	<i>abadan</i>	<i>ʔabadan</i>	never
<b>Adjectives</b>			
<i>kugur, ikugur</i>	<i>gasi</i>	<i>ʔasi</i>	hard, difficult
<i>meri</i>	<i>ʕedid</i>	<i>gidi:d</i>	new
<i>faar</i>	<i>gadim</i>	<i>ʔadim</i>	old
<i>u:s</i>	<i>gered</i>	<i>ʔerd</i> (lit. “monkey”)	ugly
<b>Nouns</b>			
<i>sigir</i>	<i>markib</i>	<i>markeb</i>	boat
<i>enga</i>	<i>sahib</i>	<i>sʕaʕhib</i>	friend, brother
<i>orod</i>	<i>waga</i>	<i>wagaʕ</i>	pain
<i>ʕiger</i>	<i>maxada</i>	<i>maxadah</i>	pillow
<i>agar</i>	<i>maka:n</i>	<i>maka:n</i>	place
<i>shuwir</i>	<i>sahan, tabag</i>	<i>sʕahan, tabaʔ</i>	plate
<i>baɣnida</i> (lit. “talking”)	<i>hekaja</i>	<i>ʕekajah</i>	story
<i>mu:le</i>	<i>ʕebel</i>	<i>gabal</i>	mountain

Table 7. Native and borrowed synonyms.

As is clear from the list above, it is commonplace to borrow nouns, adjectives, and adverbs among languages. To summarize, there is heavy lexical borrowing from Arabic into Nobiin and there are different types of borrowing patterns. The first pattern is need-based borrowing, such as *guter* from *ʔatr* “train” and *hokum* from *ʕukum* “governing.” The second type is to borrow words to indicate a different semantic meaning than the native words, such as *ebrah* from Arabic *ʔebrah* “injection needle,” leaving the native word *telli* to indicate “sewing needle,” and *shuwir* which is a native word “Nubian plate used for non-eating purposes” versus the borrowed word *sahan* is used to indicate “plate for eating.” Moreover, there are some lexemes, both native and borrowed, used to indicate the same meanings and they are used alternatively, e.g., the native word *mu:le* is used alternatively along with the borrowed one *ʕebel* from Arabic *gabal* “mountain,” and the verb “to invite” can be expressed either using the native verb *ogro* or the one borrowed *azmo* from Arabic

*şazam*. As a part of language development and loss, some native words start to disappear from the Nobiin lexicon, such as the word *ganir* was replaced by *moos* from Arabic *mus* “razor blade,” and *hait* from Arabic *heta* replaced the native word *kattari* “wall.”

### Lexical borrowing in a folk song

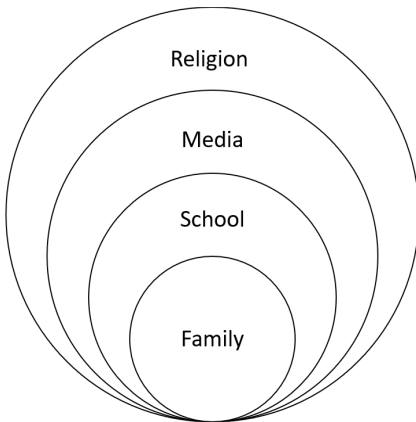
In order to illustrate the heavy borrowing, I have analyzed a folk song by Motasem Hassan, which is very famous in both Nobiin varieties, Fadija and Mahas. The song demonstrates an example of the heavy borrowing from the Arabic language found in the Nubian *oddaḡirin* “lying sick.” The concept of the song is that the singer, who is on his deathbed, describes the suffering and torture that he experienced in love. He seeks salvation in love, religion, and nature. In the end, he realizes how difficult and short life is. An English translation of the song is attached in Appendix 1.

The song has two major themes: love and religion. Lexical words about emotions and love are Nubian and not borrowed, while religious words are borrowed from Arabic. Almost all the loanwords in the song either have Islamic concepts or religious connotations, with four exceptions: the preposition *badta* “after,” *bahar* “sea,” *seher* “staying up,” *samah* “forgiveness,” and *ḡebel* “mountain.” The song illustrates a pattern of borrowing: the further away from the family circle, the more likely it is to borrow from Arabic; it is more likely to use Nobiin words when discussing family and personal matters. Figure 3 represents the pattern of borrowing in the folklore song.

The nineteen Arabic loanwords in the song are all Nubianized: Nubian suffixal morphemes are added to their stems since Nobiin is a postpositional language. In other words, the loanwords in the

song are given phonological and morphological adaptations to fit the Nobiin system. The list of loanwords in the song and the meaning of the words along with their pronunciation in Egyptian Arabic is presented in Table 8 below:

Fig. 3. Borrowing pattern in the folk song. The closer you get to the family, private, and personal area, the more likely is the presence of native Nubian words. Borrowing seems to be need-based when it comes to religion, education, and media.



Loanwords	Arabic source	English translation
<i>samah</i>	<i>samaḥ</i>	forgiveness
<i>badta</i>	<i>baʕd</i>	after
<i>sabir</i>	<i>sʕabr</i>	patience
<i>helak</i>	<i>hala:k</i>	destruction, torture
<i>tu:ba</i>	<i>to:ba</i>	repentance
<i>Adem</i>	<i>A:dam</i>	Prophet Adam
<i>dunja</i>	<i>donja</i>	life
<i>hisa:b</i>	<i>ḥisa:b</i>	judgment
<i>aza:b</i>	<i>ʕza:b</i>	torture, punishment
<i>axra</i>	<i>axrah</i>	afterlife
<i>din</i>	<i>din</i>	religion
<i>sala:</i>	<i>sʕala:h</i>	prayer
<i>sum</i>	<i>sʕo:m</i>	fasting
<i>ɕennah</i>	<i>genna</i>	heaven
<i>ennebi</i>	<i>innabi:</i>	Prophet Muhammad
<i>umma</i>	<i>umma</i>	people, nation
<i>ɕebel</i>	<i>gabal</i>	mountain
<i>bahar</i>	<i>baḥr</i>	sea
<i>seher</i>	<i>sahar</i>	staying up late

Table 8. Arabic loanwords present in the folk song.

### Phonological analysis

The following table illustrates all the loanwords in the song reflecting their Nubian as well as their Arabic phonological features. The /h/ sounds in Nubian represent both the /h/ and the /ħ/ sound, which are found in five loanwords provided in the table below:

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/samah/	/sama:h/	forgiveness
/helak/	/hala:k/	destruction
/hisa:b/	/ḥisa:b/	judgement
/bahar/	/baḥr/	sea
/seher/	/sahar/	staying up late

Table 9. Nobiin representation of Arabic /h/ and /ħ/.

The /z/ sound is only found in Arabic loanwords, and there is one example of this case in the song, which is illustrated in table 10 below. It is important to note that the consonant /ð/ found in Modern Standard Arabic, which is an emphatic voiced dental fricative, is realized as /z/, which is a voiced alveolar fricative, in the Egyptian dialect. Due to Egyptian Arabic contact with the Fadija Nubian, we can see that Nubian has borrowed Egyptian dialectal sound.

Table 10. Nobiin representation of Arabic /z/.

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/aza:b/	/ʕza:b/	torture

Nobiin monolingual speakers and fluent speakers replace the /x/ with /h/ sound as it is easier for them to use since the /x/ is not a native sound in Nubian, for example, *herlogo* “stay blessed” is pronounced with /h/ rather than *xerlogo*. However, those who know Arabic, either semi-bilinguals or heritage speakers of Nobiin, replace the consonant /x/ sound with either /h/ or they keep it as it is. As shown in Table 11 below, the /x/ sound also occurs only in words which are borrowed from Arabic.

Table 11. Nobiin representation of Arabic /x/.

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/axra/	/axrah/	afterlife

The /s/ represents both the /s/, which is a voiceless alveolar fricative, and the /s<sup>ʕ</sup>/, an emphatic voiceless alveolar fricative that does not exist in Nubian. This is illustrated in Table 12 below:

Table 12. Nobiin representation of Arabic /s/ and /s<sup>ʕ</sup>/.

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/samah/	/sama:h/	forgiveness
/hisa:b/	/ħisa:b/	judgement
/seher/	/sahar/	staying up late
/sabir/	/s <sup>ʕ</sup> abr/	patience
/sallir/	/jes <sup>ʕ</sup> ali: /	to pray
/sum/	/s <sup>ʕ</sup> o:m/	fasting

The Arabic /ʕ/ sound, which is a voiced pharyngeal fricative, is not preserved and its loss is compensated by vowel lengthening when it is not in the initial position. However, the /ʕ/ sound found in the initial position of the Arabic word /ʕza:b/, is lost and it is replaced by a short /a/ in Nubian as represented in the table below.

Table 13. Nobiin representation of Arabic /ʕ/.

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/badta/	/baʕd/	after
/aza:b/	/ʕza:b/	torture

The /u:/ sound found in the loanword /tu:ba/ is derived from the Egyptian Arabic /to:ba/, but a phonological change made for adaptation in Nubian resulted in /tu:ba/ as shown in the table below. As we can see, the standard Arabic form /tawbaʕ/ is not borrowed, rather the Egyptian one which is due to direct Nubian contact with Egyptians.

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/tu:ba/	/to:ba/	repentance

Table 14. Nobiin representation of Arabic /o:/.

As it can be seen in Table 15 below, the /d/ sound in the Arabic word /baʕd/ is replaced with /dt/ due to the sequence of /ʕ/ + /d/ which gives rise to /dt/ in Fadija Nobiin.

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/badta/	/baʕd/	after

Table 15. Nobiin representation of Arabic /ʕd/.

The /ɖ/ sound which is found in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is represented in upper Egypt as either /g/, /d/, /ɖ/, but it is more common to produce the /ɖ/ as /g/ in Cairene Arabic. It seems that Fadija Nubians did not borrow the Arabic standard sound /ɖ/ from the Southern Egyptians which is usually realized as /ɖ/; the reason of producing /ɖ/ is not because of the close contact with the Southern speakers of Egypt, but rather to differentiate between borrowed words into the Nubian language. First, Fadija Nobiin usually use /ɖ/ to produce borrowed words with /g/ sound, which is a voiced velar stop, while the /g/ is usually used with borrowed words which has the /q/ sound, a voiceless uvular stop that in Cairene Arabic becomes /ʔ/ and in Sudanese Arabic /g/. In the song, both loanwords /ɖɛbel/ “mountain” and /ɖɛnnah/ “heaven” are found with a palatalized /ɖ/. The table below provide some examples of the realizations of both /ɖ/ and /g/ sounds.

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/ɖɛnnah/	/ganna/	heaven
/ɖɛbel/	/gabal/	mountain
/siɖin/	/sigin/	prison
/ɖɛdid/	/gidi:d/	new
/gelam/	/ʔalam/	pen
/geraja/	/ʔeraja/	reading
/gadi/	/ʔa:di/	a judge
/gasi/	/ʔasi/	hard, difficult

Table 16. Nobiin representation of Arabic /g/ and /ʔ/.

There are few Arabic loanwords with no significant phonological change and they are illustrated in the table below:

Nobiin	Arabic source	English translation
/umma/	/umma/	people, nation
/dunja/	/donja/	life
/adem/	/a:dam/	Prophet Adam
/di:n/	/di:n/	religion

Table 17. Loanwords without phonological change.



There is an assimilation in the possessive structure of *Adem + in + tod + le*: “sons of Adam,” which is pronounced /dem-en to-le:/ with the /d/ sound in *tod* changing to /l/.

The accusative suffix *-ka* causes progressive assimilation with words ending with plosives. In the song, the borrowed words /hisa:b/ and /aza:b/ ending with voiced plosive /b/ undergo phonological changes /hisa:ppa/ and /aza:ppa/, i.e., devoicing and labialization due to the sequence of /b/ + /ka/, which gives rise to /pp/ in Nobiin.

### *Morphological analysis*

It is imperative to note that in the song almost all the borrowed words have a religious nature or are attached to religious practices with the exceptions of these four borrowed words: *badta* “after,” *ǧebel* “mountain,” *bahar* “sea,” and *sahar* “staying up late,” respectively. In other words, borrowing seems to be need-based.

The Nubian marker *-a* is added to nouns ending with consonant sounds, e.g., /ǧebel-a/ and /bahar-a/. I propose hypotheses to explain that: 1) the suffix *-a* is added to mark loanwords since it is attached to many of the loanwords in the song; 2) these words were borrowed this way and hence they remain in these fixed representations regardless of their syntactic cases; and 3) the *-a* is a syntactic marker with two possibilities, either a predicate marker or an adjunctive marker. In order to test these hypotheses, some examples were provided by two native Fadija speakers to illustrate a couple of the loanwords found in the song. Based on their provided examples, the *-a* is either a syntactic predicate or adjunct marker based on its grammatical function in the sentence. The native speakers’ examples illustrating the loanwords *bahar* and *ǧebel* are provided below in different grammatical cases:

- 5a      *ǧebel-li*              *dawor-a*  
 mountain-NOM    big-PRED  
 “The mountain is big.”
- 5b      *ǧebel-li*              *man-dow-a*  
 mountain-NOM    that-LOC-PRED  
 “The mountain is over there.”
- 5c      *ter-i-i*              *ǧebel-in*              *kucci-la*      *aag-ǧ-innan*  
 3PL-EMP-NOM    mountain-GEN    up-LOC    sit-PLACT-PRS.3PL  
 “They are up the mountain.”

*aj ɖebel-ka nal-is*<sup>72</sup> 5d  
 1SG mountain-ACC see-PT1.1SG  
 “I have seen the mountain.”

*bahar-i dawor-a* 5e  
 sea-NOM big-PRED  
 “The sea is big.”

*aj bahar-ka nal-is* 5f  
 1SG sea-ACC see-PT1.1SG  
 “I have seen the sea.”

*ter-i-i sigir-ka bahar-la kon-ɖ-innan* 5g  
 3PL-EMP-NOM boat-ACC sea-LOC have-PLACT-PRS.3PL  
 “They have a boat in the sea.”

*bahar-i man-dow-a* 5h  
 sea-NOM that-LOC-PRED  
 “The sea is over there.”

*man-do bahar-a* 5i  
 that-LOC sea-PRED  
 “Over there is the sea.”

*Mahammad-(l)i id-a* 5j  
 Mahammad-NOM man-PRED  
 “Mohammad is a man.”

*Mahammad-(l)i Mona-ga ufr-on* 5k  
 Mahammad-NOM Mona-ACC hit-PT1.3SG  
 “Mohammad hit Mona.”

Therefore, we can exclude that the *-a* marker found in most of the borrowed nouns in the song is to mark out loanwords into the Nubian language, but conclude rather that it is an inflectional predicate syntactic marker in the nominal sentences given above.

In Old Nubian, the morphological postpositional marker for the determiner is *-l*, while the morphological marker used in modern Nobiin to mark the nominative case is *-i*. Bechhaus-Gerst lists the marker as *-(i)l*, arguing that the subjective marker (determiner) *-l* is lost in modern Nobiin. However, she does not explore using the

72 Dr. Mohamed Taha reports that *nalis* alternatively can be replaced by its modern version *nass* with same meaning and tense. He adds that *nalis* is more likely be used by fluent speakers of Nobiin.

-i as a nominative maker in modern Nobiin.<sup>73</sup> The examples above show that the -l marker is replaced in modern Nobiin by -i or -li to mark the nominative case. The Fadija native participants confirm that -li is the most common nominative marker, but that -l can be dropped to get the reduced form -i.

In some cases, in the song -a is used as an adjunctive marker to avoid having two consonants following each other. The following example from the song illustrates the use of -a to break the consonant cluster.

- 6      *aj odd-a fir-r-en*  
 1SG sick-ADJU be.STAT-PRS.1SG-because  
 “because I am lying sick”
- 7      *sabr-a mesk-a*  
 patience-ADJU unable-COP  
 “I am unable to be patient”
- 8      *sall-a sum-min-ĩ<sup>74</sup>*  
 pray-ADJU fast-NEG.PRS.3SG-REL  
 “whoever is not performing prayers nor fasting”

According to Matras, there are four strategies for integrating borrowed nouns into a language: 1) treating borrowed nouns like native ones by integrating native inflectional morphemes patterns; 2) avoiding integration by keeping a simplified feature of the borrowed nouns; 3) integrating borrowed nouns while maintaining their original source language inflections; and 4) applying certain features of integration to mark out the borrowed nouns as loanwords.<sup>75</sup> In this part, I analyze the loanwords in the song morphologically based on Matras’s structural strategies of noun integration.<sup>76</sup>

#### *Integrating native inflection into borrowed nouns*

As it has been mentioned earlier in the analysis, all the borrowed nouns in the song are Nubianized, i.e., native Nobiin suffixes, either phonological or morphological ones, are added to their stems. Some examples are illustrated below:

<sup>73</sup> BECHHAUS-GERST, *The (Hi)story of Nobiin*, p. 32.

<sup>74</sup> Dr. Mohamed Taha reports that in some Fadija villages such as Ibream, the negation particle is *mun*, but it is *min* in other regions, such as Balanah.

<sup>75</sup> MATRAS, *Language Contact*, p. 172.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

*ennebi-in umma*

Prophet-GEN nation

“The Nation of the Prophet.”

9

As the example shows, the word *ennebi* “Prophet” is borrowed with its definite article *al-*, pronounced as *en-nebi* in the Egyptian vernacular, which is the source contact language in the Nobiin case. The Nobiin inflectional genitive marker morpheme is integrated into the borrowed noun. The reason for keeping the definite article in this borrowed word might be due to the fact that the article in this example is to mark definiteness and also reference. In other words, the Prophet Muhammad (and only the Prophet Muhammad is referred to as *ennebi*).

*do:rrro-(lo)g dʒebel-a*

above-LOC mountain-PRED

“The mountain is above.”

10

*tawo-log bahar-a*

under-LOC sea-PRED

“The sea is beneath.”

11

The examples above show native inflection integration to the borrowed nouns, i.e., the syntactic inflectional morpheme *-a* is attached to mark the predicate.

#### *Integrating native inflection into borrowed verbs*

There are just three borrowed verbs in the song and they are analyzed separately. As illustrated below, there are morphological markers added to the verbs with phonological adaptations to fit into the Nubian conjugation system.

*samaho:-mmi aj-ga*

forgive-AFF 1SG-ACC

“Do forgive me!”

12

*sall-a sum-mi:n-i*

pray-ADJU fast-NEG.PRS.3SG-REL

“whoever is not performing prayers nor fasting”

13

The example above represents native inflection to the borrowed verbs which belong to the same word class, i.e., they are verbs in both the source language and the target language. Example 6 presents borrowing of two consecutive verbs with the addition of the

negation morpheme to the second one. In both examples, it is not clear whether Nubians borrowed the stem verb (past tense) and added needed morphological markers afterwards, or whether the noun *sʿala:h* “prayer” is borrowed. In order to be certain, two native speakers provide some sentences to illustrate both verbs in various grammatical cases:

- 14     *aj ramadan-in messe-ga en-ir*  
 1SG ramadan-GEN fast-ACC keep-PRS.1SG  
 “I observe the fast of Ramadan.”
- 15     *aj messe-ga en-ir*  
 1SG fast-ACC keep-PRS.1SG  
 “I observe the fast.”
- 16     *messe-i barakaj-a*  
 fast-NOM blessed-PRED  
 “Fasting is blessed.”
- 17     *aj messe-ga f en-ir*  
 1SG fast-ACC FUT keep-PRS.1SG  
 “I will observe the fast.”

Based on these examples, there is a native word for *messe* “fast” which is used as a noun in all the examples above. The two native speakers state that it is more common in Fadija Nubian to use the native word *messe* rather than the borrowed word *sum* in everyday conversation. I propose that the word *sum* in the song is borrowed from the verbal noun /sʿo:m/ from Egyptian Arabic with phonological adaptation, found in the song as /sum/.

- 18     *aj faḡir-ka sall-ir*  
 1SG faḡir-ACC pray-PRS.1SG  
 “I pray the faḡir prayer.”
- 19     *sala-li ferd-a*  
 praying-NOM mandatory-PRED  
 “Praying is mandatory.”
- 20     *aj duhur-ka fa sall-ir*  
 1SG duhur-ACC FUT pray.1SG-PRS  
 “I will pray the duhur prayer.”

*tar faḡir-ka sall-on* 21  
 3SG *faḡir*-ACC pray-PT1.3SG  
 “He/she prayed the *faḡir* prayer.”

*tar faḡir-ka sall-in* 22  
 3SG *faḡir*-ACC pray-PRS.3SG  
 “He/she prays the *faḡir* prayer.”

*tar faḡir-ka aag sall-in* 23  
 3SG *faḡir*-ACC CONT pray-PRS.3SG  
 “He/she is praying the *faḡir* prayer.”

Werner’s glossary lists *sala:* as a noun and *sallir* as a verb noting that they are borrowed from Arabic.<sup>77</sup> As shown in the examples above, the borrowed word *sala:* with a single *l* function as a noun and *sall(a)* with double *ll* functions as a verb; it depends on its grammatical context.

As we can see from the song analysis shown above, all the words borrowed into Nubian got Nubianized, i.e., they were adapted phonologically and morphologically to fit into the Nobiin language system. Additionally, it was more common to borrow certain parts of speech such as adjectives, nouns, verbs, and prepositions. As per Appel and Muysken’s scale, the Fadija Nobiin use of Arabic has not gone down the scale to borrow copula, auxiliary, demonstrative, and pronouns from Arabic. That being said, there is still hope and opportunity to revive and restore Nobiin.

### Revitalization of Fadija Nubian

Tsunoda states that it is generally believed that language revitalization aims to maintain or revive a language to such a state that “it is spoken by a reasonable number of people, reasonably fluently and in a reasonably intact form.”<sup>78</sup> The minority group’s awareness of the endangerment of their language is the first step towards saving it. But there are many strategies to revitalize a threatened or endangered language. Hinton and Hale indicate that language revitalization programs around the world use many different approaches.<sup>79</sup> They also add that most of the revitalization programs fall into one of five categories: school-based programs, children’s extracurricular programs, adult language programs, home-based programs, and documentation and materials development.

77 WERNER, *Grammatik des Nobiin*, p. 373.

78 TSUNODA, *Language Endangerment and Language Revitalization*, p. 171.

79 HINTON & HALE, *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, p. 4.

Home-based programs could be the best ways to save languages because they will increase the daily use of a language in a home environment. Romaine draws an important “distinction between learning a language in the artificial environment of the classroom and transmitting it into the natural environment of the home.”<sup>80</sup> She also adds that language movements will not be effective if the speakers rely on schools or the state to maintain their language. However, teaching the Nubian language in regional schools might be helpful as well. Numerous efforts have been exerted to revitalize the Nubian language: Nubian clubs and educational videos on YouTube. There are also some educational organizations and centers which promote teaching Nubian and raise cultural awareness both in Egypt and the United States: The Nubian Club in Cairo and the Nubian Language Society (NLS) in Washington DC. Radio and television shows could play a critical role in renewing the Nubian language if more were to be produced.

Nubian songs can also play a great role in preserving the language and culture. If more shows and programs were to be broadcast in Nubian, that could definitely help in revitalizing the language. Appel and Muysken state that broadcasting in a minority language “can boost that language just like the publishing of newspapers, books, etc. in minority languages.”<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper considered Nubian language shift, especially the lexicon of Fadija Nubian due to the long contact with non-Nubian speakers of Arabic. It is clear that Arabic is a major factor in the language shift in Nubian, especially among younger speakers, whether urban or non-urban. The process of language change and loss has started because of the building of the High Dam in Aswan, which forced Nubians to relocate. Factors that influenced Nubian language maintenance and shift include multiple ethnolinguistic factors: status factors (i.e., language, economic, and social status), demographic factors: (i.e., relocation, marriage, education, urban and non-urban speakers), and institutional and governmental factors (i.e., religion, media, and government). According to Rouchdy, the shift occurred in various domains on various levels, such as grammatical, lexical, and syntactic.<sup>82</sup>

Lexical borrowing is extensive in certain semantic fields, such as religion or government. The Nubian song analyzed in this paper reflects heavy lexical borrowing of religious vocabulary, but no bor-

80 ROMAINE, *Preserving Endangered Languages*, p. 125.

81 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 37.

82 ROUCHDY, *Languages in Contact*, p. 15.

rowing when referring to family and personal matters. In general, more efforts need to be exerted to raise the awareness of Nubians and non-Nubians about the decline of this endangered language. Given the position of contemporary Nubian language on Appel and Muysken's hierarchy of ease of borrowability,<sup>83</sup> it is clear that the language has not yet reached a dangerously critical level signifying imminent extinction. Nevertheless, considering how common its usage has begun borrowing from Matras's categorical striations, we can see that without the above proposed intervention, extinction will become a real possibility within the coming generations.<sup>84</sup>

### Appendix 1: Song glossing

αἰ ὀλλὰ φῖρῆν cāmazōmmi aīga  
*aj odd-a fi-r-en samaho:mmi*  
 1SG sick-ADJU be.STAT-PRS.1SG-because forgive-AFF  
*aj-ga*  
 1SG-ACC  
 “Because I am lying sick, do forgive me.”

Δίῖα μῶλαffona  
*dija mo:l-afh-on-a*  
 death close-INCH-PT1.3SG-PRED  
 “Death has become close.”

αἰ μΟΥΓῶCCE βαδτὰ ωιδίCε ΔΟΛΓΙΔΙΑ  
*aj mug-o:s-se badta wid-ise dol-gid-la*  
 1SG leave-PERF-PT1.1SG after return-PT1.1SG love-NMLZ-LOC  
 “I have left (her love), but after that I returned back to it.”

cāBRA MECKA aīl aīaΓa δōYmCE  
*sabr-a mesk-a aj-l aj-afa*  
 patience-ADJU unable-PRED 1SG-LOC heart-1SG.GEN.ACC  
*ḡum-se*  
 blame-PT1.1SG  
 “I am unable to be patient, so I blamed myself.”

ἶP MINNÀ I(N) ZELAKILÀ  
*ir minna i(n) helak-i-la*  
 2SG what this torment-ADJU-LOC  
 “What is this torment?!”

83 APPEL & MUYSKEN, *Language Contact and Bilingualism*, p. 164.

84 MATRAS, *Language Contact*, p. 166.



ΤῸΥΒΑ ω(ὸ) ἀἶλ ἀΝΝΙ  
*tu:ba wo: a:jl anni*  
 repentance oh heart 1SG.POSS.GEN  
 “Oh! Repent my heart!”

ΔΟΛΛΙΚἘCCἪN KἈΡΑΔΕ ΕΛCCἪN ΝΟΥΒΑΛΑ  
*dolli-k-es-sin kare-de el-s-sin nuba-la*  
 love-HAB-PT1.1SG-REL look.for-and find-PT1-REL Nuba-LOC  
 “Having loved, looked for, and found in the Nuba,”

ΑΔΕΜΙΝ ΤΟ(Δ)ΛἘ ΦΑ ΚῸCΙ ΙΝ ΔΟΥΝἸΔΑΛΑ  
*Adem-in to(d)-le: fa koos-i in dunja-la*  
 Adam-GEN son-Q FUT satisfy.PRS.3SG.Q this life-LOC  
 “will the sons of Adam (be) satisfied in this life?”

ΑΒΑΝἈ(ἰ) ΔΙΛΛΙ ΖΙCἈΠΠΑ ΑΖἈΠΠΑ ΑΖΡΑ-ΓΑ  
*aba-na:(j) ḡill-i hisap-pa*  
 wonder-who remember-PRS.3SG.Q judgment-ACC  
*azap-pa axra-ga*  
 punishment-ACC afterlife-ACC  
 “Who remembers the day of judgment, punishment, and the Here-  
 after?”

ΔἺΓΓΑ ΚΟΥΜῸΥΝΙ CἈΛΛΑ CΟΥΜΜἸΝΙ  
*dī:ḡ-ḡa ku-mun-i sall-a*  
 religion-ACC have-NEG.PRS.3SG-REL pray-ADJU  
*sum-mīn-i*  
 fast-NEG.PRS.3SG-REL  
 “Who(ever) is not practicing their religion and not performing  
 prayers nor fasting”

ΛΔΛΑ ΝἈ(Λ)ΜῸΥΝἈ ΔΕΝΝἈΓΑ  
*la~la na(l)-mun-a ḡenna-ga*  
 no~no see-NEG.3SG-PRED heaven-ACC  
 “will never see Heaven.”

ΚἈ66ἈΝἈ ΜἈΛΛΕ ΕΝΝΕΒἸN ΟΥΜΜἈ ὪΥ ΜΟΥΓῸCCἈΛΛῸN ὪΥCΚΙCἈ  
*kaccan-a malle ennebi-in umma u:*  
 come.IMP.3PL-PRED all Prophet-GEN nation 1PL  
*muḡ-os-a-lo:n us-ki-ḡa*  
 leave-PERF-ADJU-and bad-NMLZ-ACC  
 “Nation of the Prophet, let us get together and leave the bad deed.”

λ̄ōrr(λo)Γ δεβελα ταωωολοΓ βαζαρα  
*do:rr-(lo)g ʒebel-a tawwo-log bahar-a*  
 above-LOC mountain-PRED under-LOC sea-PRED  
 “The mountain is above and the sea underneath,”

Γ̄ōyφα να(λ)καϊΓ̄ōν δολΓιδ σεζεφα  
*guji-a na(l)-kaj-go:n dol-gid seher-a*  
 look-ADJU see-COND.1SG-and love-NMLZ stay.up-PRED  
 “and if I look and see, (I find your) love is keeping me awake.”

ōy φα λ̄īρουλλο δ̄φδ ōyN νιcαρα  
*u fa di-ru-ddo a:nʒ u-n nisar-a*  
 1PL FUT die-PRS.1PL-LOC life 1PL-GEN dream-PRED  
 “As long as we will die, our life is (nothing but) a dream”

ωατταΓēν δoυNia ζαταρōyN βαταρα  
*wattage:n dunja hatarun batara*  
 woe-GEN life unfortunately game-PRED  
 “Woe life! It turned out that life is a big game.”

## Appendix 2: IPA transcription of Arabic<sup>85</sup>

ʔ	ء	voiceless glottal stop
b	ب	voiced bilabial stop
t	ت	voiceless alveolar stop
θ	ث	voiceless interdental fricative
ʒ	ج	voiced palato-alveolar affricate ; same as [j] in other systems
g	ج	voiced palato-alveolar fricative
ħ	ح	voiceless pharyngeal fricative
x	خ	voiceless velar fricative
d	د	voiced alveolar stop
ð	ذ	emphatic voiced interdental fricative
r	ر	voiced alveolar trill
z	ز	voiced alveolar fricative
s	س	voiceless alveolar fricative
ʃ	ش	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative
s <sup>ʕ</sup>	ص	emphatic voiceless alveolar fricative
d <sup>ʕ</sup>	ض	emphatic voiced alveolar stop
t <sup>ʕ</sup>	ط	emphatic voiceless alveolar stop
ð <sup>ʕ</sup>	ظ	emphatic voiced interdental fricative
ʕ	ع	voiced pharyngeal fricative

85 This table is developed based on Shariq’s consonant phonemes of Arabic. See SHARIQ, “Arabic and English Consonants,” p. 148.

<i>ɣ</i>	غ	voiced velar fricative
<i>f</i>	ف	voiceless labiodental fricative
<i>q</i>	ق	voiceless uvular stop
<i>k</i>	ك	voiceless velar stop
<i>l</i>	ل	alveolar lateral approximant
<i>m</i>	م	voiced bilabial nasal
<i>n</i>	ن	voiced alveolar nasal
<i>h</i>	ه - هـ	voiceless glottal fricative
<i>w</i>	و	voiced labiovelar approximant
<i>j</i>	ي	voiced palatal glide; same as [y] in other systems

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